6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

a fiction. Lacking means of physical enforcement because of the lack of a centralized political system, common action could take place only among those who voluntarily agreed. But when small bands of mounted warriors imposed their rule over the multitudes of non-warlike peasantry, the power-oriented conquerors made use of the Old-Slavonic system of unanimity for purposes of regimentation and governmentalization from above. That is, they imposed a dictated consensus by means of force else the opposition of the peasant majority would soon have deprived the ruling minority of its power.

In this manner a number of band chieftains of nomadic origin ruled groupings of small peasant communities, in the form of manorial principalities. Each one of these local potentates, even though Slavicized in speech or born in mixed families, still exhibited extreme self-seeking characteristics and cherished personal power and aggrandizement above everything else, a tenet that had characterized his nomadic predecessors. Each, therefore, following steppe traditions, had a scheme of his own; each was interested primarily in accumulating riches for himself and his immediate family. In consequence, these local princes and their war bands constantly intrigued and fought among themselves. They also transferred their personal and factional strifes to the neighboring towns of burghers. In these squabbles and struggle for power and expansion, the feuding princes and fighting factions did not hesitate to call on the common enemies in their neighborhoods, such as the steppe marauders or the Viking pirates to come in and help them defeat their opponents.

It was in the course of such an internecine strife (*vsta rod na rod*) in Novgorod region in the middle of the ninth century that a band of Scandinavian merchant-pirates was called on to come and help one clique of native princes against the other.[18] These "Varangians" not only came in but stayed, founding later the Russian state in the Dnieper river basin, at that time the most important merchant thoroughfare in that part of the world. These Norse conquerors and state builders were soon assimilated by the natives. In the course of time a series of new principalities was formed and old factional bickerings and fratricidal warfare was renewed.[19]

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These feuds did not affect only the relations between local lords; intense strifes and vendettas were flourishing within the family of each one of the princes. Struggle for power and expansion often caused fratricidal warfare among the brothers after the death of their father. The old chronicles and other historical documents are full of examples of such family feuds. Murder, torture and blinding among the brothers and even between fathers and sons apparently were frequent.[20] The life of each one of these local potentates was spent in perpetual warfare, in feuding, and in plundering adventures.[21]

Power-thirstiness, factionalism, and rule of crude force prevailed among these petty rulers in no lesser way than among their nomadic predecessors and overlords. The internal system of rule on the domains of each prince was not more advanced. As the Russian written laws of that period testify, the killing of prince's representatives on the part of the peasants must have been frequent. City populace often rose in riots and revolutionary outbursts against the oppressive conditions imposed by these lords.[22] It was such conditions of physical, social and emotional insecurity that favored perpetuation of the institutions, practices, and other behavior traits which were introduced by the nomadic invaders and conquerors.

III

The changes that in the course of several centuries were taking place in social and psychological structure of the Old-Slavonic world as a result of the imposition of the rule of the nomadic warriors seem to have been well reflected in the Great-Russian folklore, especially in its epic legends. The military, the peasants, the burghers, their conflicts and their character traits are personified in these narratives by a number of popular heroes.[23]

The general picture which these folk documents present shows that the social stability which existed in the Old-Slavonic society was completely shattered as a result of nomadic invasions and conquests. The invading warriors not only caused great havoc but they provoked rapid and fundamental changes in the structure of the old society. Moreover the social disorganization and the political and economic instability that resulted out of these